

Memorandum

TO: Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee

FROM: Taylor Hoskins – MES

DATE: August 28, 2025

SUBJECT: Next meeting – October 14, 2025

The next meeting of the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee (HMI C O C) will be on Tuesday, October 14, 2025, at 6:00 pm in the Conference Room at 2200 Broening Highway, Baltimore 21224. The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) will provide dinner. A link for registration to this meeting will be released as the date approaches.

Attached for your review is a copy of the final summary from the July 15, 2025, meeting.

FINAL
SUMMARY OF HART-MILLER ISLAND
CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

July 15, 2025 – 5:00 PM
Hart-Miller Island

Attendees:

Arcadis Engineering: Bert Buell
Baltimore Bird Club and Friends of HMI State Park: Joe Corcoran, Kathy Lambrow
Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection & Sustainability: David Riter
Baltimore County Seventh District: Paul Brylske (Chairman)*
Baltimore County Sixth District: Karen Wynn*
Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Chris Gleason-Smuck, Karen Alegi, Luke Terrell, Mark Spurrier, Rachel Temby, Richard Ort
Maryland Environmental Service (MES): Hillary Lewis, James Cooper, Joesph McGrain, Lincoln Tracy, Taylor Hoskins, Tim Carney
Maryland Environmental Trust: Lori Lynch*, Megan Benjamin*
Maryland Port Administration (MPA): Amanda Peñafiel, Danielle Fisher, David Bibo, Holly Miller, Katrina Jones
North Point Peninsula Community Coordinating Council: Ed Crizer, Fran Taylor*
Pleasure Boating: Chimere L. Murrill*, Salena Rosa
Sports Fishermen: Sam Weaver*
State of Maryland: Senator Johnny Ray Salling

**Appointed member of the HMI C O C*

Action items:

1. DNR will meet internally and with MPA to discuss the next steps for North Cell Habitat Development.
2. MPA and MES will provide updates to the HMI C O C on North Cell Habitat Development and HMI Infrastructure Working Group progress as it becomes available.
3. MES will distribute the DNR PowerPoint presentation slides to the HMI C O C. – *Action item completed: Presentation slides were sent out via email on July 16, 2025.*
4. The next meeting of the HMI C O C will be determined. – *Action item completed: The next meeting of the HMI C O C will be held on October 14, 2025.*
5. Senator Johnny Ray Salling will introduce legislation to appoint a waterman to the HMI C O C.
6. MPA and MES will meet to consider an increase in bird tours, access to the North Cell for birders, and a docking facility for private boats.

1.0 Welcome & Opening Remarks

Paul Brylske, Chair

The group began the meeting by stating their name and affiliation. Mr. Paul Brylske thanked everyone for their attendance as well as the new Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee

(HMI C O C) members. Mr. Brylske is proud of the continued collaboration between the C O C, Maryland Port Administration (MPA), Maryland Environmental Service (MES), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the local community.

The March 11, 2025, meeting summary was approved.

Mr. Brylske complimented MES and the newly restored Station 265-Personnel Pier along with DNR and the newly constructed boardwalk and thanked MPA for the “Get the Scoop on Dredging” open house at the Sollers Point Multi-Purpose Center in Baltimore’s Turner Station community.

2.0 Friends Group Update

Paul Brylske, Chair

The Friends of HMI were awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Baltimore County Community Development Grant Program to purchase 24 interpretive signs to be displayed throughout the South Cell. These signs have been completed and will be installed by DNR and MES. Mr. Brylske displayed an example of one of the interpretive signs for the group to observe and thanked Ms. Robin Reed for her hard work toward the project.

The Friends completed a trash cleanup event in May and will be holding a fundraiser event on Saturday, September 27, 2025, at Charly’s Sue Creek Restaurant starting at noon.

An application was submitted for a \$200,000 Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD) grant with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. If granted, the Friends of HMI will partner with the developing Friends of Masonville Cove to create a strategic plan to strengthen long-term stewardship and public engagement. Funding will support two coordinators who will help each Friends group grow its outreach, volunteer programming, and organizational capacity. At HMI the coordinator will work to improve accessibility, deepen school partnerships, increase community participation, and will also lead volunteer events and strengthen programming that connects residents to conservation through inclusive, hands-on experiences. The Friends are also seeking a restoration grant through the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Outreach Grant program. Ms. Amanda Peñañiel added that Port fee in lieu of mitigation funds contribute to the CBT grant program, and it is good for MPA partners to apply.

3.0 HMI Site Updates

Lincoln Tracy, MES

The HMI Land Base Pier has been replaced. The HMI Station 265-Personnel Pier has been restored. During work on the Station 265-Personnel Pier the HMI crew docked at the Crane Pier which is heavily impacted by wind and waves.

The HMI Operations team have continued general operations, vegetation control, and roadway maintenance.

The air conditioning unit in the HMI Operations building, originally installed in the 1990s, has failed. A contract has been sent out for a replacement unit to be installed in August. In the meantime, the HMI crew are utilizing window units and fans.

The water pumping system that hydrates the South Cell Holding Pond and South Cell is no longer operating efficiently. Two diesel pumps are currently being utilized to maintain adequate water elevation in the South Cell. Although there have been measurable rainfall events recently, evaporation rates have been high. Target elevation in the North Cell is 37.5 feet to 38.0 feet. Current elevation in the North Cell is 37.7 feet. Water quality issues begin to arise when elevation drops below 37.5 feet. The South Cell water elevation is also stable and continues to be monitored.

4.0 Birding Updates

Joe Corcoran, Baltimore Bird Club

Mr. Joe Corcoran thanked MES, MPA, and DNR for providing the Baltimore Bird Club with access to the North Cell and reiterated how grateful he and the group are. The bird club is growing, and demand is increasing. The Baltimore Bird Club started with about 250 people and has grown to about 600 people in the last 4 years. In 2024, the Baltimore Bird Club had 148 birding events throughout the area, and this year there are over 200 events.

Mr. Corcoran would like more access to HMI for birders. He would like access to eventually increase to once a week, not only via MES or DNR transportation but possibly private transportation as well. Mr. Brylske added that the Friends Group just had a 25-foot C-Hawk with a Yamaha 250HP motor and front work cabin donated to them. Mr. Brylske recommended putting a Friends of Hart-Miller Island logo on the side of the boat and using it to transport visitors to HMI, the only problem is getting off the boat or docking at the island. Mr. Corcoran said the Baltimore Bird Club is willing to help with access through possible private funding or major organization fundraising, and suggested the installation of a portable floating pier.

One way the Baltimore Bird Club is gaining so many new members is through urban birding; approximately 60% of birding is done in Baltimore City. The Baltimore Bird Club has a partnership with Enoch Pratt Free Library to hold a bird walk at each of the library's branches throughout the city. Many of these new members to the Baltimore Bird Club have heard about HMI and are interested in visiting.

Mr. Corcoran expressed concern about bird habitat at HMI and would like to see an expert in birding involved in the design and plans for the North Cell as they progress. He requested that one bird club member be on the C O C and is willing to present legislation to implement this. Mr. Corcoran would like to see the bird habitat stay and become a state or national wildlife refuge.

Mr. Brylske and Mr. Dave Bibb confirmed that when the C O C was first put into legislation the focus was not on birding, but has evolved over time with the help of individuals like Mr. Corcoran, Mr. Timothy Carney, and many others. Mr. Brylske commended their work in the birding community and noted that birding should be considered more in the future.

Ms. Kathy Lambrow asked how the birders can achieve more access to the North Cell without the need for MES, MPA, or DNR resources. MPA and MES will meet to consider these additional birding requests.

5.0 DNR Updates

Chris Gleason-Smuck, DNR

Mr. Chris Gleason-Smuck pointed out the new boardwalk decking, roofs, siding, and paint around the DNR facility. He explained that staffing is currently low due to the retirement of Ms. Reed and a state hiring freeze. DNR staff travel to HMI about 1-3 times a week to clean campsites and bathrooms, provide drinkable water for the public, collect camp fees, and complete general maintenance. DNR are planning a clean-up event for The Friends of Hart-Miller Island on Pleasure Island and coordinating work for the Maryland Conservation Corps to complete throughout the South Cell and DNR facility.

Mr. Fran Taylor asked what attendance on the campsites is like and how visitors pay. Mr. Gleason-Smuck responded that they are typically occupied, the campsites are first come first served, and fees are collected by the ranger when able.

Mr. Brylske noted that there have been some recent issues at HMI State Park due to the lack of staff presence. Mr. Gleason-Smuck explained that DNR is aware of the issues, and they are doing the best they can with the resources given.

The HMI Race event will be held on October 4, 2025.

6.0 HMI North Cell Habitat Development

Mark Spurrier, DNR

As an action item from the March 11, 2025, HMI C O C meeting, DNR was asked to meet internally and with MPA to discuss the next steps toward HMI North Cell Development. DNR met internally in April and June 2025. In these meetings DNR focused on the vision of HMI State Park and what DNR plans to do with the North Cell, the challenges faced for optimal management, and what external support DNR will need to address specific issues. Mr. Mark Spurrier handed out PowerPoint presentation slides that reviewed DNR's progress since March 11.

Mr. Bibb added that people may need to adjust expectations at this moment due to DNR short staffing.

The slides begin with the history of HMI and dike construction. HMI State Park offers hiking and biking trails in the South Cell, birding, wildlife, and diversity. Mr. Spurrier said maintaining diversity is one of DNR's priorities. HMI State Park also offers waterfowl hunting from September to February and primitive camping at HMI State Park and Pleasure Island.

DNR's vision for the North Cell is to maintain the current infrastructure to limit any impact to the berms and utilize the existing roadway for hiking and biking. DNR would like to upgrade the existing HMI ranger station with benches, kiosks, and interpretive panels for visitors to gain education before accessing the cells. DNR proposes adding a second observation tower by Spillway 007 to allow for a different vantage point and view of the North Cell. Lastly, DNR plans to leverage the support they currently have throughout the community and engage with the Friends of HMI to utilize support through volunteers, donations, and grant opportunities, if they arise.

Challenges DNR faces for optimal management include additional staffing. Mr. Brylske asked Mr. Spurrier and the group if there is potential for a camp host. Mr. Spurrier said it is possible but it would be difficult considering camp hosts typically sign a 30-day contract and a travel trailer would need to be transported to HMI. Other challenges DNR faces for optimal management include space and shelter to store and maintain equipment, shelter for rangers, camp hosts, and visitors in the event of a storm. DNR requires a land base and docking facility at North Point State Park to allow for quicker response times from rangers in the event of an emergency. This includes improved ranger boats that can transport a larger number of visitors safely. DNR will need to upgrade the current water and septic systems to accommodate more visitors, but funding is a challenge. HMI State Park does not generate enough revenue to sustain itself, therefore funding must come from another part of the DNR and Maryland Park Service budget. Mr. Brylske asked how House Bill 717 (Natural Resources – Public Lands – Acquisition, Staffing, Operations, and Funding) would impact fundraising. Mr. Spurrier said he is unsure. Mr. Spurrier explained that grants and fundraisers are great, however it is not guaranteed money that the park needs to operate successfully. Mr. Brylske suggested a collaborative private-public partnership to leverage individuals that could assist with funding. Mr. Spurrier agreed. Lastly, DNR has the challenge of *Phragmites* and management of invasive species.

DNR will require long-term external support, knowledge, and expertise from partners and contractors. This includes assistance with the maintenance of the berms and repair in an emergency. The infrastructure and power supply are ageing and may need upgrades or installation of solar units.

Mr. Spurrier explained that the next steps are meeting with the Infrastructure Working Group. The current Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for continued operations and habitat development at HMI between MPA, MES, and DNR expires on December 31, 2025. Coordination of the next agreement and steps forward involve the North Cell Option D Concept. This concept was agreed upon in February 2021 between MPA, MES, and DNR.

Mr. Spurrier briefly reviewed the three potential North Cell design options moving forward:

- Option D includes a 202-acre pond and a minimum design depth of 2.8 feet to help deter the growth of *Phragmites australis*. The Option D concept meets goals and objectives set by MPA, MES, and DNR. Option D is expensive and would require alternative funding sources. Option D would also require a hydraulic dredge and has the potential to impact existing habitat for a period of time.
- An alternative from Option D that also meets goals and objectives is to bring in dredged material or off-site fill. This would raise the upland elevation and intern make the pond deeper deterring the growth of *Phragmites australis*. Ms. Peñafiel added that dredged material can be accepted in a strategic way. This option also has the potential to impact existing habitat for a period of time.
- The final option is to maintain the habitat and North Cell as is. This is the least expensive option however requires long-term management of *Phragmites australis* due to a shallow pond.

DNR will continue holding meetings internally, with MPA, and the Infrastructure Working Group. DNR will meet with MPA and MES to negotiate renewal of the IGA. DNR will begin building a realistic timeline toward goals for HMI State Park and the North Cell. DNR will continue communication with the HMI C O C and Friends of HMI. Mr. Corcoran asked how a wildlife habitat specialist can have input in the planning process. Mr. Spurrier said that a wildlife specialist was involved in the June 2025 internal DNR meeting and believes there will be an opportunity for public comment at some point. Mr. Richard Ortt confirmed that the DNR wildlife specialist has been Mr. David Brinker for many years and added that the C O C and Friends of HMI will be included in the planning process.

Ms. Peñafiel reviewed the different timelines between each option as written on slide 15 of DNR's presentation and asked for the group's feedback as to which option they would like to see. Mr. Brylske highlighted the need for more programming, collaboration, community input and partnership, and recommended members from Baltimore County get involved. Senator Johnny Ray Salling suggested that DNR's presentation be delivered to the State of Maryland Budget and Taxation Committee as he believes this is an opportunity for the State of Maryland to partner with Baltimore County and invest in HMI State Park. Senator Salling stated there are many volunteers and scout groups that would enjoy visiting HMI and recommended more outreach to the community. Senator Salling said he will be appointing a waterman to join as a member of the HMI C O C.

Ms. Lambrow asked if Option D will continue to be part of the renewed IGA. Ms. Peñafiel explained that it is currently memorialized in the IGA with goals and objectives that have been agreed upon by MPA, MES, and DNR. Ms. Lambrow and Mr. Corcoran expressed concerns that Option D may be too paired down to suit wildlife and they would like to be included in more planning meetings. Ms. Holly Miller explained that as state agencies there are limitations, and options and designs that can be accomplished will be presented to the group for consideration. Mr. Spurrier ended by saying that DNR will continue coordination with the HMI C O C and all groups and partners.

7.0 Administration and Open Discussion

Dave Bibo, MPA

Mr. Bibo thanked the group and emphasized MPA's commitment to HMI. Mr. Bibo reviewed action items. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm. The next meeting of the HMI C O C is to be determined.